

# Birth Control Pill

## What is the pill?

Birth control pills, also called oral contraceptives, are pills that you take at the same time every day to prevent pregnancy.

## How does it work?

Hormones in birth control pills keep your ovaries from releasing an egg and prevent you from getting pregnant.

The pill does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV. Always use a condom to protect yourself from HIV and other STIs.

## What are the benefits of taking the pill?

- An effective form of birth control
- Rapidly reversible
- Many women will notice lighter periods and less cramping.
- Periods will be regular, or women can choose not to have periods on the pill.
- Tends to improve acne and oily skin
- Protects against a form of ovarian cancer and uterine cancer

## How effective is it?

**Perfect Use:** Less than 1% of women who always remember to take the pill at the same time every day will get pregnant in the first year of use.

**Typical Use:** About 9% of all women who use the pill will get pregnant in the first year of use (Includes women who use the pill incorrectly or inconsistently).

## When is it safe to have sex after starting the pill?

If the birth control pill is started within 5 days of the start of a normal period, it will protect you right away from pregnancy. Otherwise, use a backup method such as condoms or don't have sexual intercourse for 7 days after starting the pill.

Tell all your health care providers about any medications you are taking, including the pill. A few medications can make the pill less effective in preventing pregnancy. There are other more effective birth control methods that you may want to use.



## Will I have side effects from the pill?

Some women who take the pill may have side effects that include nausea and vomiting, sore breasts, headaches, spotting or irregular bleeding, and moodiness.

These side effects do not mean that the pill is dangerous or is not working. They will generally go away 2 to 3 months after starting the pill. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions or concerns about side effects on the pill.

## What if I want to stop taking the pill or become pregnant?

As soon as you stop taking the pill, you will be able to get pregnant. If you do not want to get pregnant right away, you will need to use another method of birth control.

## Warning Signs:

Call your clinic immediately if you:

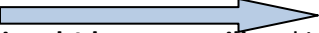


- Think you may be pregnant
- Have heavy or prolonged vaginal bleeding

Or experience:

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Severe headache
- Severe pain or numbness in your arm or leg
- New problems with your eyesight, like blurry vision or seeing spots
- Severe abdominal pain

These can be signs of rare but serious, life-threatening health problems, such as heart attack, stroke, or blood clots in the veins or lungs, and require the care of a medical provider.

## What if I miss one or more pills?

Late or Missed Hormone Pills	What to do
<p>If you are <b>late taking 1 hormone pill</b> and it has been less than 24 hours since you took your last pill: Or </p> <p>If you <b>missed 1 hormone pill</b> and it has been between 24 and 48 hours since you took your last pill:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take the late or missed pill as soon as possible.</li> <li>• Take the rest of the pills in your pack at the usual time, even if it means taking 2 pills on the same day.</li> <li>• No back-up method is needed.</li> <li>• Emergency contraception is not usually needed but is available if needed, especially if other hormone pills have been missed in this pack or the previous pack.</li> </ul>
<p>If you <b>missed 2 or more hormone pills in a row</b> and 48 hours or more have passed since you took your last pill in the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> week of the hormone pills:</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take the most recent missed pill as soon as possible and throw away any other missed pills.</li> <li>• Take the rest of the pills in your pack at the usual time, even if it means taking 2 pills on the same day.</li> <li>• Use a back-up method such as condoms or don't have sex for the next 7 days.</li> <li>• Emergency contraception should be considered and is available if needed.</li> </ul>
<p>If <b>2 or more pills were missed</b> in the last or 3<sup>rd</sup> week of the hormone pills:</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take the most recent missed pill as soon as possible and throw away any other missed pills.</li> <li>• Take the rest of the hormone pills in your pack at the usual time, even if it means taking 2 pills on the same day.</li> <li>• Don't take the hormone-free pills; instead, start a new pack of pills.</li> <li>• Use a back-up birth control method, such as condoms or don't have sex for the next 7 days</li> <li>• If you can't start a new pack right away, use a back-up method such as condoms or don't have sex until you have taken a pill every day for 7 days from a new pack of pills.</li> <li>• Emergency contraception should be considered and is available if needed.</li> </ul>

\*Vomiting or diarrhea may make your pills less effective in preventing pregnancy. If you have vomiting or diarrhea, treat this as though you missed a pill or pills.

**Take a pill the same time of day every day.**

**Tip:**  
**Set an alarm on your phone that will go off at the same time every day to remind you to take your pill.**